

The Farrier's Corner: by Ray and Michelle Smith

We refer to April as "founder month". Founder (a.k.a. laminitis) is thought to be a metabolic disease. Horses that are insulin resistant, have thyroid issues or diseases such as Cushings (a pituitary gland disorder) are predisposed to laminitis. However, any horse can develop laminitis given conducive circumstances. It is a serious condition and can result in death.

Laminitis has many causes including retained placentas following foaling, toxicity, extreme concussion and compensation weight bearing following injury. However, the most common cause is feed related.

With warm spring weather, grass emerges from dormancy and begins rapid growth. The sugar and carbohydrate load in young spring grass can be very dangerous for equines. Horses should be gradually introduced to spring pastures. Those with a predisposition to founder should avoid them altogether.

Overfeeding of "hot feeds" – large amounts of grains and rich hays such as alfalfa- to inactive horses is a leading cause of laminitis. Horses fed in this manner, that have not yet succumbed to laminitis, often founder with the addition of spring grass or stress.

While systemic in nature, laminitis manifests most obviously in the feet. Earliest visible signs are generally lameness (often initially in the front feet), heat in the hooves, sweating, increased vital signs and shifting of weight from side to side or front to rear. The heat is evidence of inflammation in the structures

(laminae) which secure the foot within the hoof capsule. As the condition worsens, the laminae fail and the coffin bone (toe) may rotate downwards or sink without rotation. In severe cases, it may perforate the sole.

Founder treatment is a team effort of the owner, farrier and vet. Laminitis may be acute and severe or chronic with occasional lameness. Acute cases require immediate veterinary attention. Chronic cases are often managed by the farrier alone. Two things are important at the onset, assessing the extent of damage and diagnosing the root cause.

There are many shoeing products developed for laminitic horses. However, there is a saying, "Anything will work some of the time, but nothing works every time." Farriers may opt only for careful, regular trimming to lower heels, bring the toe back and ease breakover. They may, however, decide on shoeing. Opinions vary over which shoes to use and when to use them. The following are a few options: reverse egg bars (open toes), heart bars, rolled toe shoes and screw on wooden clogs. Shoes may be applied with frog support pads or flat pads with dental impression material or other soft packing for cushioning and support. Boots or casting tape with sole pack may also be options.

Founder shoeing packages are short-term therapeutic treatments. They will not cure an animal, but may help it survive the episode and recover as well as possible. Although severity

varies, laminitic hoof damage is irreversible. Depending on medical circumstances and husbandry, horses may or may not experience recurrent bouts.

There are some "red flags" that indicate a predisposition to laminitis. Recent research conducted at Virginia Tech indicates a correlation between cresty necks in horses and the development of laminitis. The greater the crest, the greater the predisposition. Easy keepers are also at risk. These horses become, and remain, overweight on minimal feed. Both cresty necked horses and easy keepers may have underlying metabolic disorders.

Horses with long curled hooves, or hooves with uneven wavy lines originating at the heels and encircling the hoof, may have already suffered one or more laminitic episodes.

Awareness of laminitis extends into antiquity. Writings from 300 B.C. refer to "Barley Disease" where horses fed excessive amounts of grain developed laminitic symptoms. An equine report approved by the Roman Emperor Constantine in 900 A.D. listed possible causes for founder. To this day, the condition remains poorly understood and difficult to treat. Preventative husbandry and early detection remain the best tools in combating laminitis.

Laminitis is a complex subject for one article. If you suspect acute laminitis, contact your vet! For general questions, or more information, contact Ray and Michelle at 592-4621.

Guild Offers Two Art Classes in May

The first of two classes offered at the Southern Oregon Guild will be taught by painter and Board member, Cheryl Williams Dolan, Saturday, May 4 and Sunday, May 5 from 1:30 to 3:30 pm.

Dolan will teach Landscape Painting in Acrylic in a two-session class at the RCC Kerby Campus. Her acrylic and oil paintings have been receiving rave reviews and finding new homes on art patrons' walls from the moment they first appeared at the Guild's Gallery in Kerby. Her work can be seen on the Guild's website at <http://southernoregonguild.org>

"This is the second in a series of classes exploring landscape painting using acrylic paints," says Dolan. She invites artists to "come learn how to see nature's hidden designs and create depth and texture in your paintings."

Class fee for landscape Painting in Acrylic is \$40 for the two sessions. Call the

Guild at 592-5019 to reserve a space or register on line at <http://southernoregonguild.org>

The second May class, Basic Drawing, will be taught by multi-discipline artist, Linda Corey-Woodward, May 21 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. She makes it fun to learn to draw shapes and shadows, sketch objects, flowers, animals and scenes.

Corey-Woodward's lovely pastels can be seen at the Guild Gallery on the RCC Kerby Campus.

Class fee for the Basic Drawing Class is \$20 and includes materials. Students should bring water and a snack.

Call to reserve your seat by May 15; 541-592-5019 or register online at <http://southernoregonguild.org> Both classes meet at the RCC Kerby Campus (Kerby Belt Building) at 24353 Redwood Highway in Kerby, Oregon.

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